

Fernan Lake Road

Vol. 4: November 2003

PROJECT UPDATE

Public Interest and Support

Thank you for the updates and corrections to the mailing list for the Fernan Lake Road Safety Improvement Project. And a special thanks to those requesting that this and future project updates and newsletters be sent as email attachments, because this helps reduce our project costs.

The project team also has been coordinating and exchanging data on existing conditions with Fernan Village's study of Fernan Lake and watershed. More details are provided under "Water Quality" in this update.

Your comments on the project are always welcome and much appreciated by the project team. They will be added to those previously submitted on the project.

Alternatives

The NEPA scoping process for Fernan Lake Road EIS yielded two major categories of issues and concerns for developing alternatives. One was to minimize disturbance along the existing road, especially along the lake. The other was to explore routes that avoid the lake altogether.

So far there are several alternative routes that avoid the lake, and also several alternatives that make substantial use of the existing road.

Presently no alternatives have been eliminated from consideration. A newsletter planned for December will discuss the screening criteria that will be used to select alternatives for detailed analysis in the Draft EIS.

Since the last update, the project team with our partner agencies conducted a field review of additional alternatives developed using the Interactive Highway Safety Design Model. IHSDM was described in the September project update.

Technical reports on physical, biological, and social aspects of the environment are being revised and updated to include these additional alternatives.

Water Quality

NEPA scoping indicated protecting the water quality of Fernan Lake is a major environmental concern of the public. It is also a primary focus of the Fernan Lake and Watershed Management Plan being conducted for Fernan Village in 2003. Since the last update the two project teams have been in touch frequently so that each study benefits from the work of the other.

For example, the Fernan Lake study can provide timely data on lake bathymetry (bottom contours) and water quality to provide context for analyzing some of the road alternatives along the lake. And the Fernan Road study has detailed wetland information that makes the lake and watershed management plan more complete.



May 2003



September 2003

Several environmental permits address water quality. Permitting agencies were contacted about the Fernan Lake Road project in September. Another meeting is scheduled for mid-November to discuss water quality concerns and opportunities that are emerging as alternatives are developed.

Water quality is another opportunity for you to provide more comments on the project. We are very interested in your thoughts on how the existing Fernan Lake Road affects the quality of the lake and creek. The project team also would appreciate your observations of how high the creek flows next to the road during spring runoff, both in an average year and "flood" years.

Visual Simulations

Fernan Lake is a very scenic area, so the appearance of road alternatives along the lake is an important consideration. Therefore, the project team is preparing visual simulations based on preliminary design information. Representative simulations from key viewpoints may be included in the Draft EIS.

Keeping You Informed

The project team plans to issue a newsletter in December. It will be longer than the project updates so more information can be provided.

Topics that will be discussed in the December newsletter include:

- Project status relative to overall schedule,
- Agency feedback from the mid-November meetings, and
- Screening criteria to select alternatives for detailed analysis.

Individual alternatives may be discussed in the Draft EIS, which is scheduled for public distribution in April 2004.

If there are topics you would like considered for future project updates or newsletters, please send them to:

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Project Team

The project partners are the East Side Highway District, Idaho Transportation Department, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, and Western Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration. David Evans and Associates, Inc. is the lead consultant for the current planning and environmental evaluation phase of the project.

Thank you again for your continuing support and interest in the Fernan Lake Road safety improvement project.



Federal Highway Administration

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